THE ARCHITECT PAINTER VISION QUEST: SIGNIFICANT PLACE. Ultimately, all architectures we call great, let alone those we call serious, answer this question: *How do we make in this world a Significant Place to be?* Because the word *building* derives from an ancient word that means "to be." And a truly Significant Place feels important, influential, or special—because it means something. And so we wonder: How can we construct an enduring dwelling? A shelter from the ordinary and the unbearable? A refuge for contemplation and invention? A precinct of poetry and order? A sanctuary for imagination, study, work and rest? How can we establish foundations—for a paradise regained? How can we structure the solid and the void of human existence, the visible and the invisible, make manifest the ardent will to form and the relentless demand to mean, and realize the presence of transcendent architectures that illumine the mind and move the heart, that uplift the eyes and stir the soul? How can we make of building art? How can we make an architecture that reflects the architecture of our being? An architecture that gives outer expression to the ontology of our inner vision? How can we disclose the true form of the edifice of the world . . . through exquisite reflections of beauty and intelligence in habitable form? Architecture presents limitless possibilities for expression of Significant Form and Significant Space: Significant Place.

THE ARCHITECT PAINTER JEF7REY HILDNER TAKES ANOTHER LOOK AT THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SYNTHETIC CUBISM AND ARCHITECTURE.

EMPTY SPACE / FULL SPACE expands artistic concepts about form and space that Hildner introduced in his essay "Significant Space" and his pamphlet *Picasso Lessons*. He builds specifically on the foundation of principles that he established in a series of essays about Synthetic Cubism, including "Collage Reading: Braque | Picasso," which will reappear along with his essays "Drawing as Contemplation" and "Remembering the Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" in the forthcoming multivolume series of books, ***Architecture: From A to Z***, released by the Architectural Theory Library under the auspices of the Department of Architecture at Osmangazi University.

Drawing again on the analogy of chess—an analogy that he amplifies in his books ***Henry Trucks — Painter*** (also available online) and ***Daedalus 9***—Hildner eyes the watershed Synthetic Cubist paintings produced from 1912-1914 by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and Juan Gris and cracks what Hildner calls Synthetic Cubism's "Empty/Full Secret Code." He unpacks the "Empty/Full" properties of form and space in these three artists' paintings, as well as in his own paintings and buildings, in paintings by Paul Cézanne, and in buildings by architects Rudolph Schindler, Bernard Tschumi, and Le Corbusier.

The goal? Higher comprehension of what Hildner terms the "Visual Chess Game of Move & Meaning."

NOTE: This is an updated version of the essay that I wrote in 2001. I explain why I revised the essay in a note at the end of this updated version.

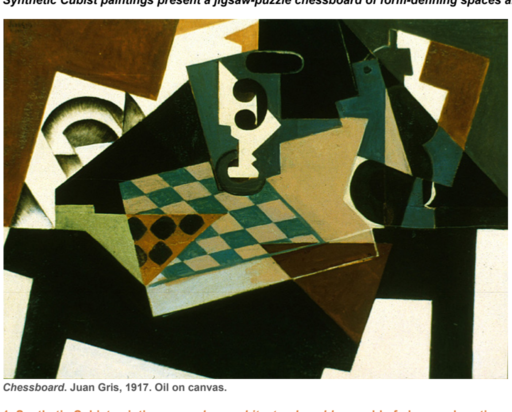
FULL empty *Space-defining forms*

"Don't go into architecture to get a living unless you love it as a principle at work." —Frank Lloyd Wright
"The building and the site cannot be separated intellectually." —Robert L. Sweeney on the architecture of Rudolph Schindler

EMPTY SPACE / FULL SPACE

More Lessons From Synthetic Cubism

Synthetic Cubist paintings present a jigsaw-puzzle chessboard of form-defining spaces and space-defining forms



***Chessboard*. Juan Gris, 1917. Oil on canvas.**

1. Synthetic Cubist paintings *reveal an architectural world*: a world of plans and sections, walls and windows, dwellings and landscapes
2. Synthetic Cubist paintings *conceal a principle at work*: form as space-definer versus space-occupier

When you look at the painting above by Juan Gris—titled, *Chessboard*—what do you see?

Perhaps you can identify not only a chessboard but also a table, maybe a drawer where the chess set is kept, the floor and walls of the room, and some funky super-sized chess pieces. But Gris doesn't make it easy to discern the objects in this still-life of fractured forms!

I ask, "**What do you see?**" because that's the question I ask myself when I look at any painting, building, or visual creation. And I look with this goal in mind: How do I apply what I see to my own paintings and architecture.

Of the many Synthetic Cubist paintings that I could present as my opening move in this essay, I chose this painting because I want to introduce the theme of **chess**. Even though I don't play chess at an advanced level (and you don't have to know how to play chess to keep up with this essay), chess concepts help me as an artist, as various chess concepts also helped Gris and many other artists and theorists, including painters Marcel Duchamp and Henri Matisse, architect Farkas Molnár, and literary theorist Victor Shklovsky, the early 20th-century Russian Formalist whose research has sparked my own insights into the chess-based nature of art, simultaneously aesthetic and symbolic. In my work, I play what I call the "Visual Chess Game of Move & Meaning"—on my quest to create a Signifcant Place. This essay focuses on Moves.

Chess players call the first phase of a chess game (the time during which they move their pieces into position) the **opening**. Chess players build on the opening to create the **middle game**, which fortifies them for the showdown during the third phase, the **end game**. The three-part structure of a chess game echoes Aristotle's three-part structure of storytelling: beginning, middle, end. And I follow this classic tripartite structure in the chess-game of this essay about the design principle that I term "**Empty Space / Full Space**"—or simply, "**Empty/Full**."

1. OPENING

In the spring of 1997, I presented a paper titled "**7 Lessons of Painting for Architecture**" at the annual meeting of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture. I focused on a Synthetic Cubist picture that Juan Gris painted in the same year, 1917, that he painted *Chessboard*, a picture titled ***Still Life with Guitar*** (see below). And I talked about this work of art in terms of **visual literacy**.

As I maintained in that paper and other articles, such as "**Formalism: Move | Meaning**[2]," visual literacy requires training and practice—just as verbal literacy does. Think what it takes for an English speaker to acquire fluency in a foreign language, say French, Russian, or Chinese. Hard work. (No pain, no gain!) Some people have more aptitude for visual literacy than others and gain ground more quickly. But every step forward in our growth and development of visual literacy can open up expansive new vistas and help us more fully understand what we see.

Astronomer William Herschel said it well: "**Seeing is in some respect an art, which must be learnt.**" And this humility equipped the German-born British scientist to survey the heavens in 1781 and see what no one else could see: Uranus—the first planet to be discovered since prehistoric times. Without similar humility and dedication along a life-long learning curve toward visual intelligence, architects and painters risk looking into the night sky of art with "eyes that are blind," as master 20th-century architect-painter Le Corbusier put it, doomed to create mediocre work. And discover nothing.

Musicians require ear-training. Visual artists require eye-training. Eye-training leads to heightened powers of perception—**deep Sight**—and to the acquisition of **professional aesthetic chops**, including a pair of essential chops that I call the two Os: **Optical chops** and **Organizational chops**.

Think of optical chops as an artist's creativity and skill in the handling of color, contrast, texture, material, scale, and image. Think of organizational chops as an artist's creativity and skill in the handling of form and space and the arrangement and positioning of elements that have complex optical properties (color, contrast, texture, material, scale, and image). The more advanced an artist's two Os, the more advanced her **Visual I.Q.**

An example—and let's make it easy: Let's start at the low end of the professional skill ladder and talk about shopping, not designing. Say you have the ability to select an exquisitely designed and manufactured chair to go in your living room. Now how expertly do you coordinate the color, contrast, texture, material, and image of that chair with the same properties of the other furniture—the sofa, end tables, floor lamps, coffee table? Think of the furniture as **chess pieces**. Does each chess piece reflect the skill set of a talented **Chess-Piece Design Wizard**? Does your ensemble of chess pieces (your ensemble of furniture) reflect the **aesthetic intelligence** of a **Chess-Set Design Master**? In other words, on a zero-10 scale, how high is your Visual I.Q. when it comes to Optical chops?

OK, now picture your ensemble of beautiful furniture as chess pieces ***on a chessboard***. How well do you **position** each piece of furniture in the room—relative to the other furniture and relative to the walls, windows, and circulation zones? How sensitive are you to major and minor spatial intervals? To edges, centers, and alignments (primary, secondary, and tertiary)? To counterpositions, juxtapositions, and oppositions? Does your arrangement of furniture chess-pieces reflect the skills and talents of a **Champion Chess Player**? Of a **Chess Grandmaster**? In other words, on a zero-10 scale, how high is your Visual I.Q. when it comes to Organizational chops?

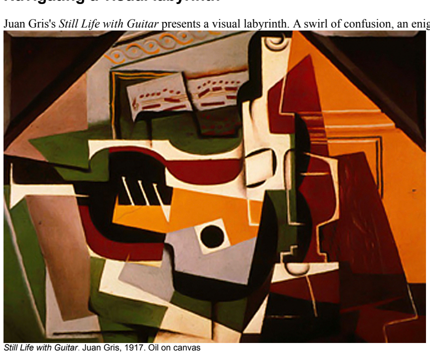
Master chess players must score high in only one category: *organization*—because chess players don't design the chess pieces. But architects do: They have to design the chess pieces *and* win the chess game (again, metaphorically speaking). Master architects must score high in both categories: *organization and optics*.

And Grandmaster architects—**Grandmasters of Visual Chess**? For them, the design of the chess pieces and the configuration of the chessboard—the design of a building and the configuration of a building's site (the relationships between form and space)—cannot be separated intellectually, and a Grandmaster's treatment of organization and optics reflects this ideal. An ideal that I seek in my work.

My study of Synthetic Cubism has helped me inch toward this ideal, somersaulting me into new and exciting insights about the codependence of form and space. I've continued to analyze Gris's *Still Life with Guitar* since writing "7 Lessons." I've cut through optical distractions to solve the mystery of Gris's painting's remarkable organization. I've found a special key that unlocks not only this painting, but virtually all Synthetic Cubist paintings.

Navigating a visual labyrinth

Juan Gris's *Still Life with Guitar* presents a visual labyrinth. A swirl of confusion, an enigma, obstructive and off-putting—the picture resists translation. Unless you have a Theseus-like Ariadne thread to help you navigate.

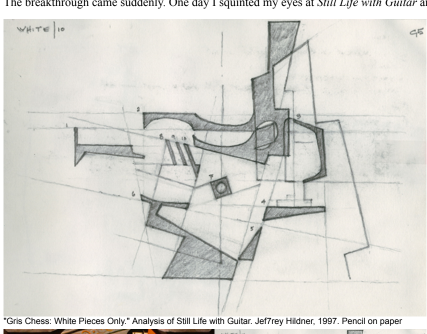


Still Life with Guitar. Juan Gris, 1917. Oil on canvas

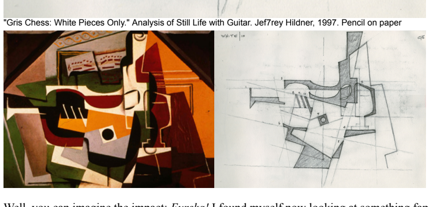
Remember the myth of Daedalus, the legendary first architect who designed and constructed King Minos's labyrinth to imprison the vile Minotaur. The King's daughter Ariadne asked Daedalus to help her lover, Theseus, journey safely into and out of the labyrinth. She knew: Who better to decode the labyrinth than its designer. So the creative and crafty Daedalus gave Ariadne a spool of thread, and she gave it to Theseus. The Greek hero unspooled the thread as he journeyed into the labyrinth along the route that Daedalus told Ariadne then slayed the Minotaur and followed the thread back out to safety.

In the summer of 1997, I discovered a **thread of insight** that helps navigate the labyrinth of *Still Life with Guitar*. I discovered this thread after many years of studying simpler works by Picasso and Braque and looking for their practical application to my teaching and practice of architecture and painting.

The breakthrough came suddenly. One day I squinted my eyes at *Still Life with Guitar* and the white pieces jumped out. I grabbed my sketchbook and drew what I saw: **white pieces only**.



"Gris Chess: White Pieces Only." Analysis of Still Life with Guitar. Jef7rey Hildner, 1997. Pencil on paper



Well, you can imagine the impact: *Eureka!* I found myself now looking at something familiar: a **map**—a site plan of a building (or the site plan of a city) with contiguous garden spaces, or outdoor rooms, extending in all directions. I saw the **section** of a house—an astonishing creation—rising from grade through a hierarchy of eccentric sculpted spaces and rooms, floors, walls, and cantilevered terraces to a roof terrace with a pool—is that an observatory tower at the top? I felt as if I'd finally put on 3-D glasses to watch the 3-D picture at a movie theater. Because when I figured out that looking at this Gris painting requires a special way of seeing, everything I saw in the painting suddenly went from fuzzy to focus. A painting that struck me before as strange and confusing now looked familiar and clear. What used to look like a visual train wreck with limited value to my artistic development now looked like a glistening gold mine.

And here's the kicker. Recall how Le Corbusier referred to the two basic conditions of space (in keeping with the old French concept of space): *le plein et le vide*. Translation: ***full** and **empty***. Gris's painting is full. But my white-pieces-only drawing reveals what Gris's painting conceals. By sweeping aside everything but the white pieces of the painting-puzzle, I made a clearing. I found space. Through my drawing, congestion drained away. My white-pieces-only drawing transformed *Still Life with Guitar* from full to empty.

I then methodically tackled all the other color sets in his painting, drawing each set separately and uncovering a complex game of intertwined form-making and space-making—reminding me of the truth of Mondrian's assertion, "**Art is a game and games have their rules.**" I got to the heart of *Still Life with Guitar's* intricate, self-referential **music-like structure**. Gris's thick, congested labyrinth-like painting rises from layers of collaged subsystems, all paradoxically empty.

From then on, I looked at Synthetic Cubist paintings in a new way: as **complex Empty/Full color-shape systems**—sophisticated jigsaw puzzles—abounding in lessons about **aesthetic organization** for painters and architects. At their core, I discovered, *Still Life with Guitar* and other Synthetic Cubism works role-model the modern spirit of art that French painter Maurice Denis summed up in 1890 during the upheaval of Post-Impressionism: "It should be remembered that a picture—before being a warhorse, a nude, or an anecdote of some sort—is essentially a flat surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order."

Look again

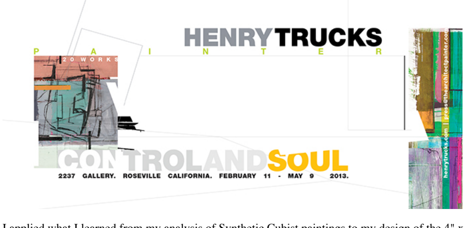
OK, now look again at the painting that starts this essay, Juan Gris's painting ***Chessboard.*** What do you see?
Applying what I learned from Gris's *Still Life with Guitar*, when I look at his *Chessboard* (below right), I see this (below left): **Empty/Full.**



My diagram above of Juan Gris's *Chessboard* shows black pieces only: **Empty**.
In contrast to Gris's actual painting: **Full**.

Negative Cubism

"Space is shaped. Space is full of curves and dents and wonderful shapes." —Albert Einstein, Peter Moffat's screenplay *Einstein and Eddington*



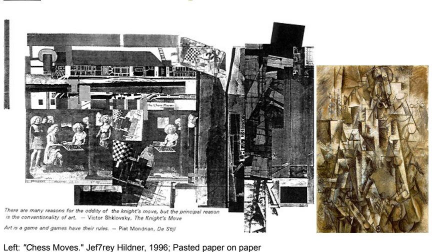
I applied what I learned from my analysis of Synthetic Cubist paintings to my design of the 4" x 9" postcard (above) announcing an exhibition of my paintings. (I paint under the name Henry Trucks.)

The Empty/Full properties of space play a leading role in this digital collage. Note that the edges are full, and the center is empty. This white empty center has a long horizontal shape with an irregular perimeter. I sheared a rectangle to create an asymmetric parallelogram of space, which a supporting ensemble of jigsaw-puzzle edge pieces helps to define. To make the space look more open than closed, I made the perimeter fairly porous. (By contrast, in my "black pieces only" diagram of Gris's *Chessboard*, the large rotated empty rectangle in the middle of the composition has a thick, solid perimeter and looks more closed than open.) Upshot: I torqued an ordinary rectangle into a special eccentric shape to create a major empty space—a dynamic **figural void** (aka *negative space*) that you can read in plan, section, and elevation, signaling the presence of what I term "**Significant Space**."

Space can be full, or space can be empty.
You can fill space with the elements of form, or you can create space with the elements of form.
You can design forms that occupy space, or you can design forms that define space—you can design the solid *and* the void and invest space with *significance* that flows from *compositional importance*.
More: You can invest space with *significance* that flows also from *symbolic meaning*.

I focus on these choices in my 2-D work, choices that stem from an awareness of Empty/Full Space and the yinyang of **Significant Space** and "**Significant Form**" (a term coined in 1914 by British art critic Clive Bell in his book *Art*), because I seek to find the form and space of my architecture. One of my goals: Create *Significant Space* that resonates with both visible importance and invisible meaning.

2. MIDDLE GAME



Left: "Chess Moves." Jef7rey Hildner, 1996; Pasted paper on paper
Right: *The Poet*. Pablo Picasso, 1911; Oil on canvas

Congestion or Decongestion

Now let me put other pieces of my **Empty/Full visual game theory** into play, starting with a duality that I term **congestion** and **decongestion**.

Compare *Still Life with Guitar* to my collage "Chess Moves" (above), which I show side by side as a visual forward to the online version of 7 Lessons of Painting for Architecture. Gris made his picture five years after the amazing miracle year, **1912**, when Braque and Picasso introduced **collage** (French for "**gluing**") into their work—a crucial turning point: Collage marks the end of Analytical Cubism and the start of Synthetic Cubism. But in this painting, Gris didn't make an actual collage—as I did in "Chess Moves." He simulated a collage. *Still Life with Guitar* depicts a Synthetic Cubist still life, interior, and portrait. And Gris builds the infrastructure of his canvas in ways that approximate the **complexity, density, difficulty,** and **ambiguity** of paintings that mark the high point of Analytical Cubism in 1911, such as Picasso's ***The Poet*** (above). I emulate this visual spirit in my collage.

Consider how *Still Life with Guitar* and "Chess Moves" share a common **technique**, or **device**, of organization: the "**split screen**." (See "Deep Space/Shallow Space" by Thomas Schumacher; *Architectural Review*, January 1987, Volume CLXXXI, No. 1079, pp. 37-42). In both pictures, a **vertical fault-line** about one-third from the right simultaneously separates and connects the **deep space** (left) and the **shallow space** (right) within the frame. Both pictures also have a dense **jam-packed center**. My collage has more going on at the periphery. The right third commands as much attention as the left two-thirds. I force you to scan the edges—and the space beyond the edges—of the arrangement. My goal: outward-pushing energy—**centrifugal force**. Gris's painting, by contrast, radiates from the center. Elements pile up around the circle-in-the-square vortex of the guitar's sound hole. The effect: inward-pulling energy—**centripetal force**. Both pictures emphasize **density**. But they could use a few pointers about the benefits of **decongestion** and rest.

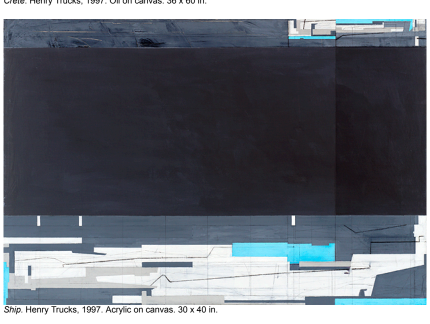
In other words, with respect to the center of the canvas, both are far from empty. Both are, almost bewilderingly, full.

Empty Center / Full Edge + (Cut Figures + Jigsaw Design)

But contrast those two visuals to these two paintings, which I call *Crete* and *Ship*—part of my "ancient myths meet modern landscapes" series, with a focus on what I call **Space-Making**. (You can see these and other paintings at www.henrytrucks.com.)



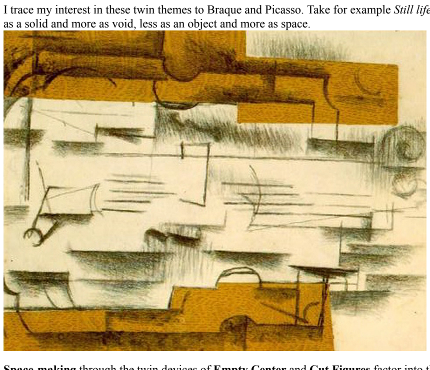
Crete. Henry Trucks, 1997. Oil on canvas. 36 x 60 in.



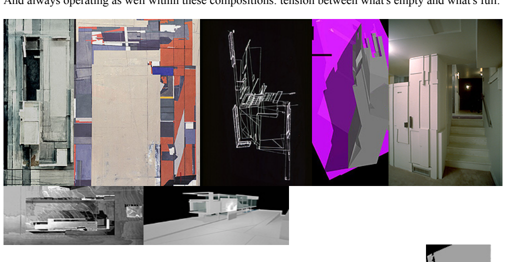
Ship. Henry Trucks, 1997. Acrylic on canvas. 30 x 40 in.

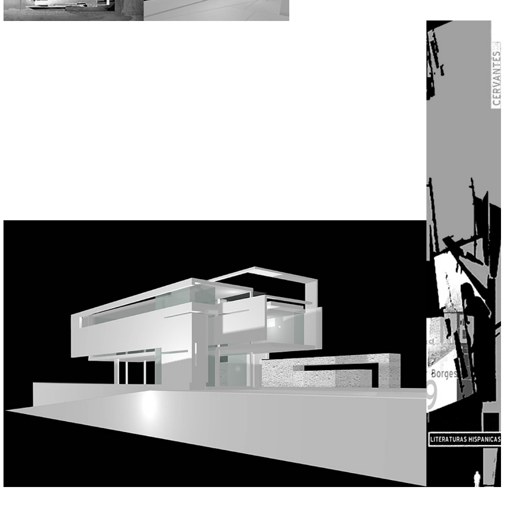
In each painting, you can see two clear concepts, or artistic devices, at work:
1) An **Empty Center (**or **Open Center)** and **Full Edges**
2) **Space-defining Forms**—or as I also call them, **Cut Figures**—the basis for what I call **Jigsaw Design**

I trace my interest in these twin themes to Braque and Picasso. Take for example *Still life with a violin* by Braque, which he made in 1912. (I rotated Braque's collage 90 degrees clockwise below to show a clearer connection to *Crete* and *Ship*.) Braque pasted two large wood-grain cut-figure bars onto the canvas to define a violin that appears less as a solid and more as void, less as an object and more as space.

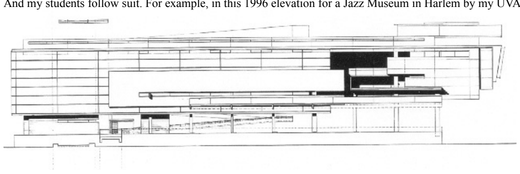


Space-making through the twin devices of **Empty Center** and **Cut Figures** factor into the designs of many of my paintings, drawings, and buildings.
And always operating as well within these compositions: tension between what's empty and what's full.



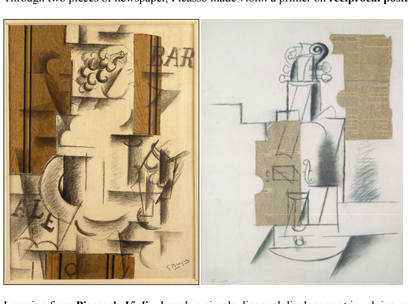


And my students follow suit. For example, in this 1996 elevation for a Jazz Museum in Harlem by my UVA graduate student Patrick Magness:

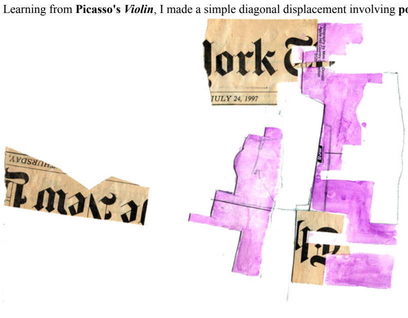


Positive-Negative Spatial Moves

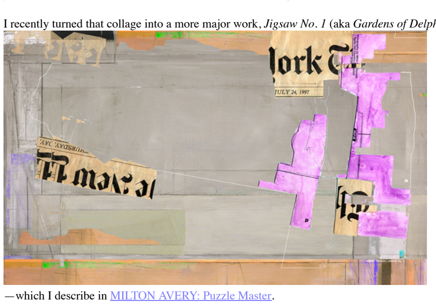
I've explained in other articles, including Transfiguring, that I learned how to think about these principles by studying the works of Synthetic Cubism. In addition to the Braque collage shown above (*Still life with a violin*), I learned lessons from the very first pasted-paper collage, Braque's ***Fruit Dish and Glass*** (left). Braque's landmark collage—which I wrote about in Collage Reading: Braque | Picasso—set the stage for **arranging cut-figures as space-defining fragments of an empty center**. And I learned lessons from a subsequent pasted-paper collage, ***Violin*** (right), by Picasso, who obviously learned a thing or two from Braque about cut-figures, **space-making**, and an open center. Through two pieces of newspaper, Picasso made *Violin* a primer on **reciprocal positive-negative shapes**. (For more on Picasso's *Violin,* see my pamphlet PICASSO LESSONS: The Sixth Woman of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* and my essay MILTON AVERY: Puzzle Master.)



Learning from **Picasso's *Violin***, I made a simple diagonal displacement involving **positive** and **negative** (labeled **p** and **n**) in my pasted-paper collage "**Knight's Move** _NYT: cut, separate, slide."

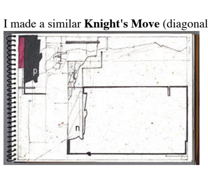


I recently turned that collage into a more major work, *Jigsaw No. 1* (aka *Gardens of Delphi*)

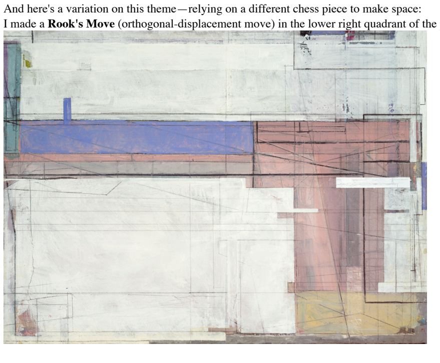


—which I describe in MILTON AVERY: Puzzle Master.

I made a similar **Knight's Move** (diagonal-displacement move) in this drawing, which I call "Piero Abstract," from 1997.

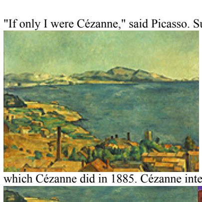


And here's a variation on this theme—relying on a different chess piece to make space:
I made a **Rook's Move** (orthogonal-displacement move) in the lower right quadrant of the painting *Bridge*.

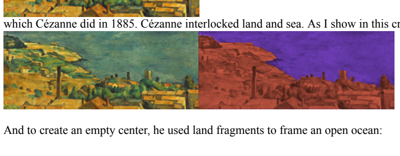


The Fountainhead

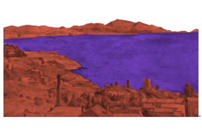
"If only I were Cézanne," said Picasso. Sure enough, we can find the origins of Picasso and Braque's research into interlocking cut figures by turning to the Father of Modern Art. Look at this painting, ***Gulf of Marseilles***—



which Cézanne did in 1885. Cézanne interlocked land and sea. As I show in this crop and diagram, he used **reciprocal Cut Figures** to achieve a **50/50 split**.

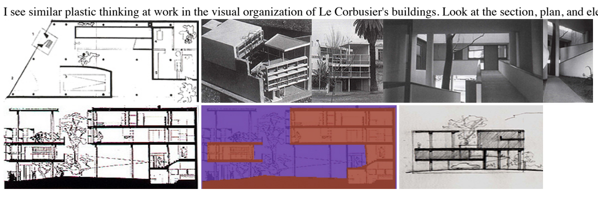


And to create an empty center, he used land fragments to frame an open ocean:



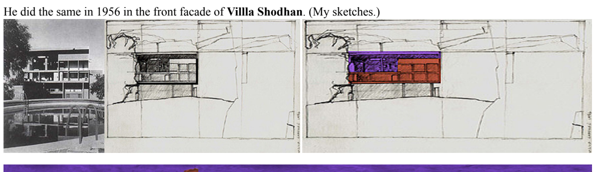
"A" Students

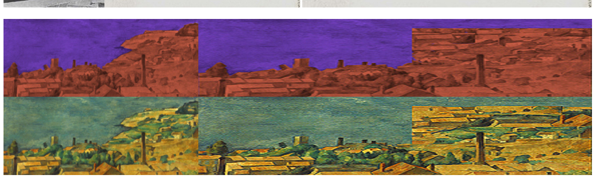
I see similar plastic thinking at work in the visual organization of Le Corbusier's buildings. Look at the section, plan, and elevation of this house—especially the section, which my diagram and pencil sketch on the lower right highlight.



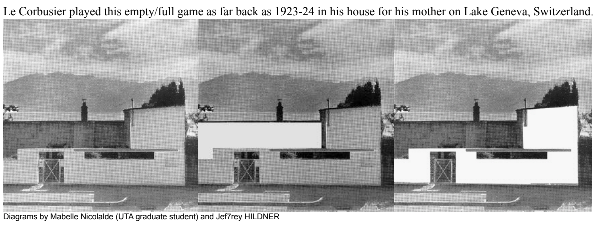
Through his **empty/full (negative-positive) form making** at Maison Curuchet (1949), Le Corbusier enriched the inside/outside relationships of the house. As Cézanne did 64 years earlier in *Gulf of Marseilles*, Le Corbusier balanced void and solid (negative and positive), striking a 50/50 split.

He did the same in 1956 in the front facade of **Villla Shodhan**. (My sketches.)



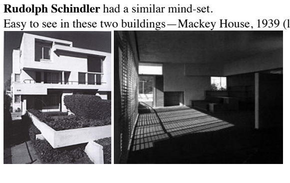


Le Corbusier played this empty/full game as far back as 1923-24 in his house for his mother on Lake Geneva, Switzerland.



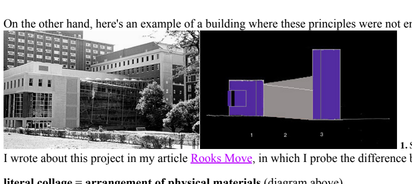
Diagrams by Mabelle Nicolalde (UTA graduate student) and Jef7rey HILDNER

Rudolph Schindler had a similar mind-set.
Easy to see in these two buildings—Mackey House, 1939 (left), and Fitzpatrick House (1937-38).



Clueless

On the other hand, here's an example of a building where these principles were not employed: Lerner Hall—the student center at Columbia University in New York City by Bernard Tschumi.



1. Short masonry mass; **2.** Glass mass (enclosed ramps); **3.** Tall masonry mass

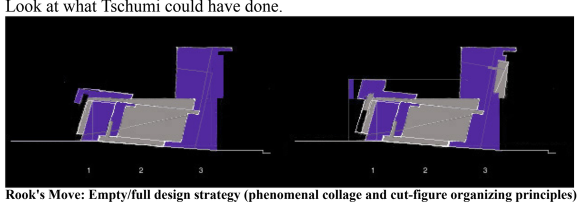
I wrote about this project in my article Rooks Move, in which I probe the difference between what I call **literal collage** and **phenomenal collage**. In a nutshell:

literal collage = **arrangement of physical materials** (diagram above)
phenomenal collage = **codependence of space and form** and **ambiguity of figure and ground** (diagrams below)

For example, imagine creating your own collage. What you would do? By what principles would you create your collage?
If you were to simply make **a creative arrangement of materials, colors, and shapes**, you would create a literal collage.
But if your were to make a creative arrangement of materials, colors, and shapes that **also expresses codependence of space and form** and **ambiguity of figure and ground**, you could use **interlocking cut-figures** to achieve this goal—and you would create a phenomenal collage.
Which type of collage dovetails with the moves and counter-moves of **empty/full principles**?
Phenomenal collage.

But what type of collage did Tschumi make at Lerner Hall?
Literal collage.
By ignoring cut-figure organizing principles, the designers didn't create ambiguity and reciprocity of space and form. They created a **clumsy side-by-side arrangement of three unconnected, autonomous objects**.

Look at what Tschumi could have done.



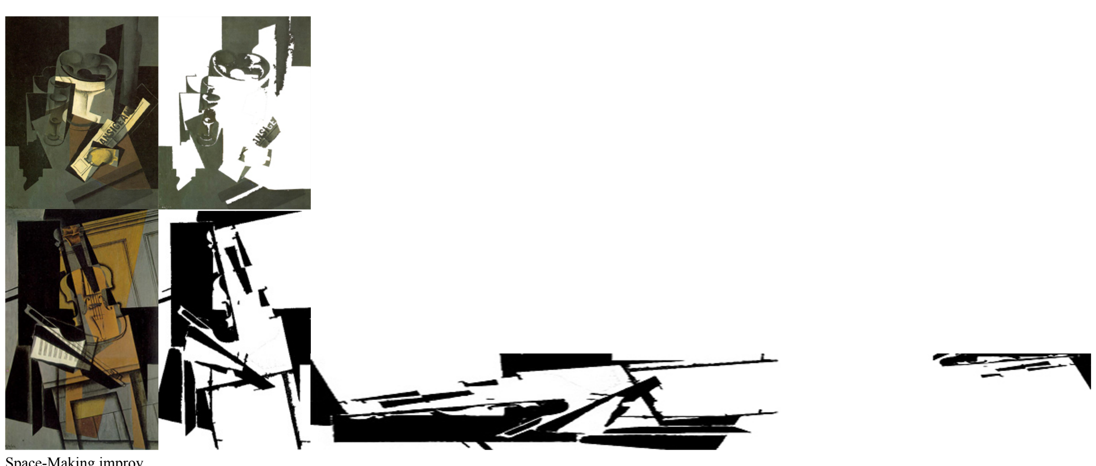
Rook's Move: Empty/full design strategy (phenomenal collage and cut-figure organizing principles)
1. Rook; **2.** Codependent Space Between; **3.** Rook's home

These two diagrams show how the building could have been organized if the designers had relied on phenomenal collage and the toolbox of empty/full principles—specifically the **Rook's Move**. If the architects of Lerner Hall had learned their Synthetic Cubism Lessons, if Tschumi and his team knew what Cézanne, Braque, Picasso, and Gris knew—and what Le Corbusier and Schindler knew—about **modern space-form principles**, the architects of this important building on the campus of a major US research institution could have created a far more advanced, coherent building. As my diagrams show, a strategy that springs from **an empty/full mind-set unifies the composition** through **dynamic interlocking forces**—creating **a family of clearly connected puzzle pieces**.

Think of the left blue form in those two design variations as a fragment that broke away from the right blue form—the way a rook moves in chess. Think of the left blue form (the short masonry mass) as the rook.Think of the right blue form (the tall masonry mass) as the rook's home. Not only does this Rook's Move keep the blue forms connected (and interconnected) visually, this move also creates **a codependent space between**—the glass mass, which houses the zig-zagging ramps. And the rook's move charges the entire emsemble with the tilted spirit of the ramp.The result? Not an inert disconnected trio of elements, like the actual building. Rather, a clearly **integrated aesthetic system**—a system of dynamic and rhythmic interdependent puzzle pieces: **visual music**.



3. END GAME



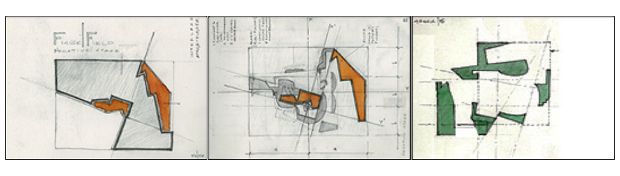
Space-Making improv.

Visual Music

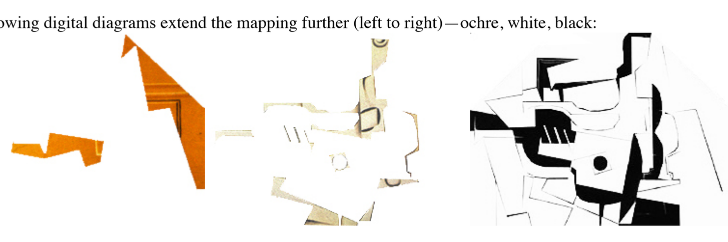
Let's go back to Gris's *Still Life with Guitar*. Gris learned his Cézanne lessons. In *Still Life with Guitar*, the Cézanne-like organizing principle of **interlocking cut-figures** operate with super intensity. As does a range of other empty/full type principles, including phenomenal collage.



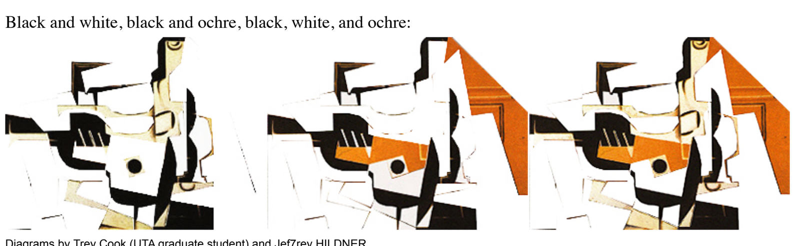
In 1997, I not only mapped the white pieces (above), I also mapped other color sub-systems of the painting (left to right, below)): **ochre**, **ochre and black**, and **green**, uncovering a hidden world of **marvelous, figurally eccentric space-making systems**—floor plans and sections.



The following digital diagrams extend the mapping further (left to right)—ochre, white, black:



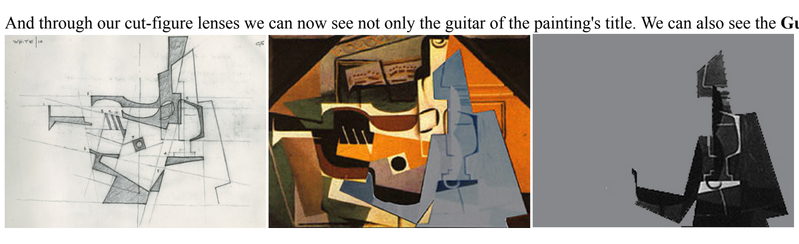
Black and white, black and ochre, black, white, and ochre:



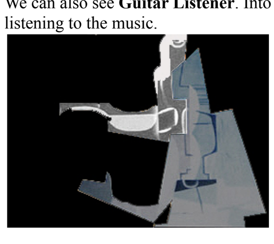
Diagrams by Trey Cook (UTA graduate student) and Jef7rey HILDNER

Guitar Player / Guitar Listener

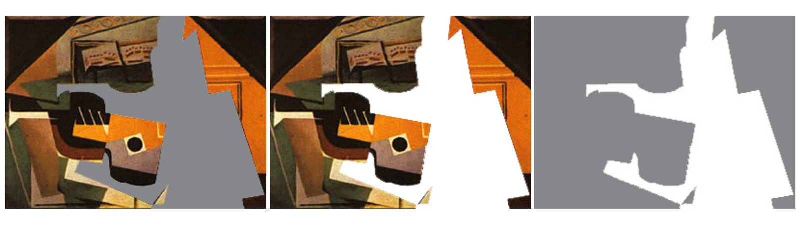
And through our cut-figure lenses we can now see not only the guitar of the painting's title. We can also see the **Guitar Player**.



We can also see **Guitar Listener**. Into the tapestry of his **phenomenal-collage painting**, Gris wove in the complimentary form of an **interlocking female figure**. She appears to be reclining mermaid-like on her stomach, face forward, legs extended diagonally into the z-axial distance to the left, as if she is resting comfortably on a sofa or daybed listening to the music.



Juan Gris fused **Guitar Player** and **Guitar Listener**. The painter locked man and woman together along the principle vertical zig-zag fault line of the painting. Rather marvelously, they also define the shallow-space (right side/him) and deep-space (left side/her) of the painting. And watch what happens when **male and female shapes merge**. They create a vivid shape that cuts through the right third of the rectangle. As an example of how this discovery has practical import for architecture, transpose this shape from a solid to a void—from full to empty (from gray to white)—and read this space either in plan or in section. Picture this space as the entry hall of a building.

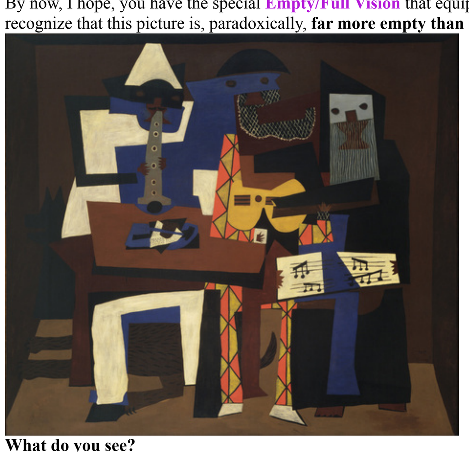


I connect this funky guitar player/guitar listener space to a similar jagged rip that Picasso created 10 years earlier in the spatial fabric of *Les Demoiselles*—a rip that creates what I call **Significant Space**. (See PICASSO LESSONS: The Sixth Woman of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*.)



Picasso Problem

By now, I hope, you have the special **Empty/Full Vision** that equips you to navigate the labyrinth of a Synthetic Cubist painting. So, for example, when you look at Picasso's 1921 ***Three Musicians*** (below), you can now appreciate that the apparent chaos of fractured elements rests on an underlying system of jigsaw-design order. And you will recognize that this picture is, paradoxically, **far more empty than it first appears**.

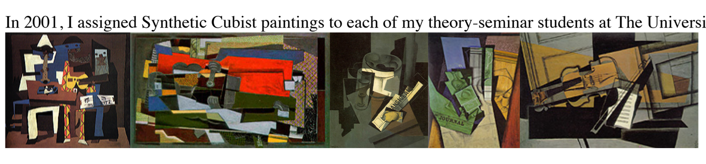


What do you see?

But note this too: When we strip away the mask of chaos and reveal the secret world of open space that lurks within this painting, we nevertheless see that when it came to the overall design of his rectangular picture, Picasso cared little about concepts of "empty center" and "full edges." He piles everything up in the middle of his picture, making edges that are empty and a center that is full. Though I like his painting very much for various reasons, not least its inherent Empty/Full properties, I regard the painting as an opposite expression of the architecture of space that I seek in my work.

Space-Making: Empty/Full Archeology

In 2001, I assigned Synthetic Cubist paintings to each of my theory-seminar students at The University of Texas at Arlington. I asked my students to map their assigned painting the way I mapped Gris's *Still Life with Guitar*.



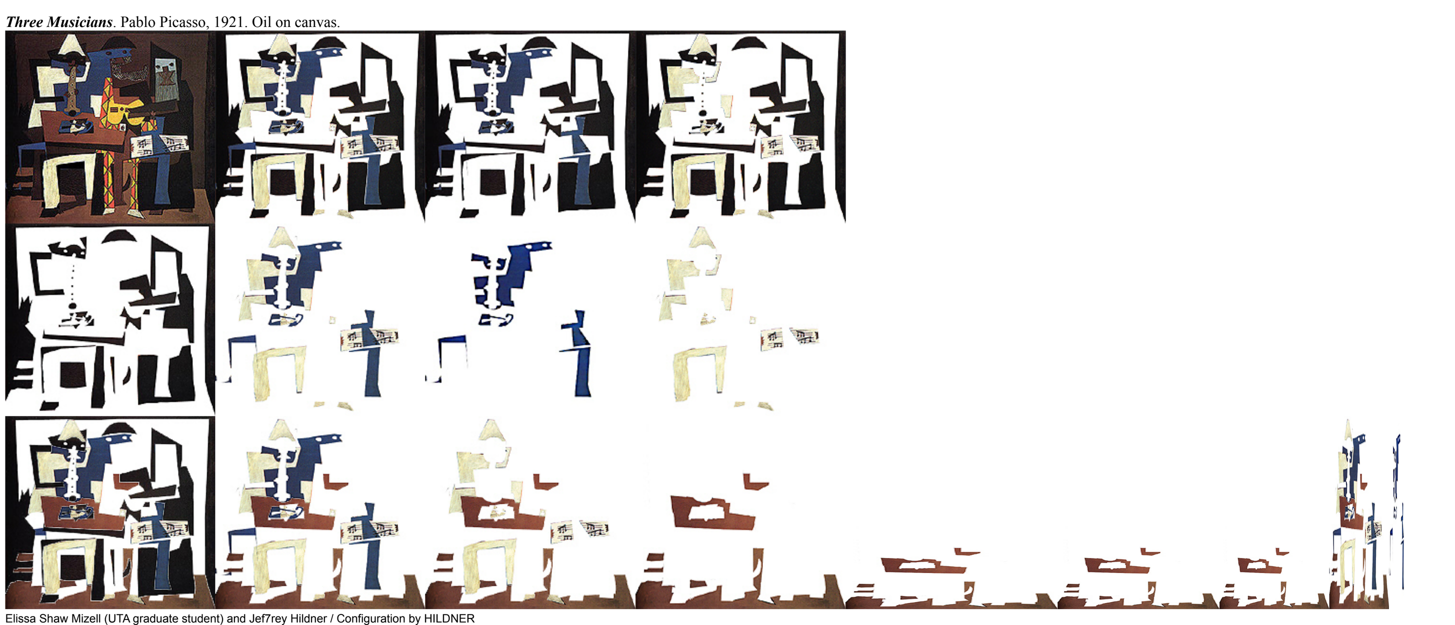
I asked my students to see the painting as a rectangular parcel of land for a building, as a site plan than encompasses buildings and gardens. And I coached each student toward a series of empty/full diagrams. Some students mapped the color-systems of their assigned painting less fully and rigorously than other students, but as you can see from the examples below, these diagrams throw a bright light on another clear empty/full principle—a principle that historian Robert L. Sweeney drew from the work of Rudolph Schindler: "**The building and the site cannot be separated intellectually**."

In other words, these Synthetic Cubism diagrams—analyses, deconstuctions, mappings—reveal something along the lines of what critic Meyer Schapiro described in one of his essays: a "conception of the world as law-bound in the relation of simple elementary components, yet open, unbounded, and **contingent as a whole**."

Synthetic Cubism reinforces the advanced concept that a building or any other visual system operates as a **fragment of a larger whole**. From Synthetic Cubism we learn how form functions not only as space-occupier, but also as **space-definer**. We learn about shape-making and form-making in the service of what I call **Space-Making**, or **SpaceCraft**.

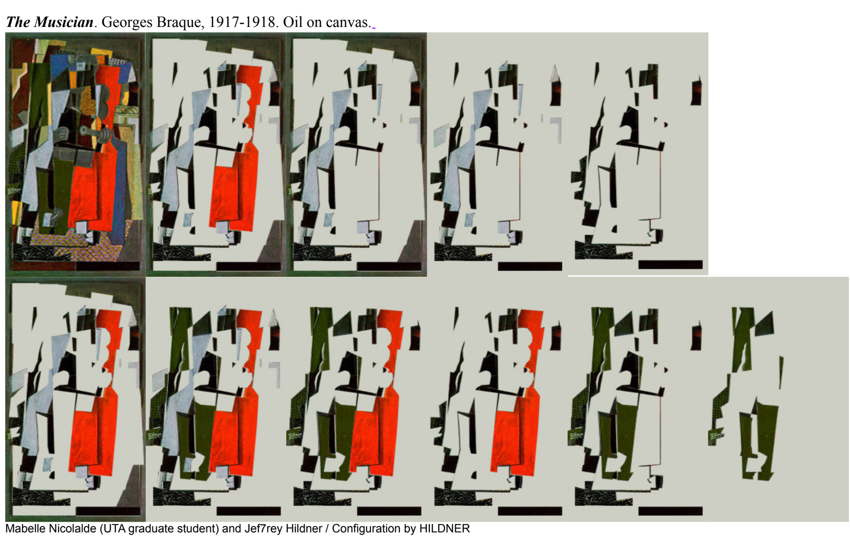
We learn about the **dynamic yin-yang** of **Empty/Full Space principles at work**.

Three Musicians. Pablo Picasso, 1921. Oil on canvas.



Elissa Shaw Mizell (UTA graduate student) and Jef7rey Hildner / Configuration by HILDNER

The Musician. Georges Braque, 1917-1918. Oil on canvas.



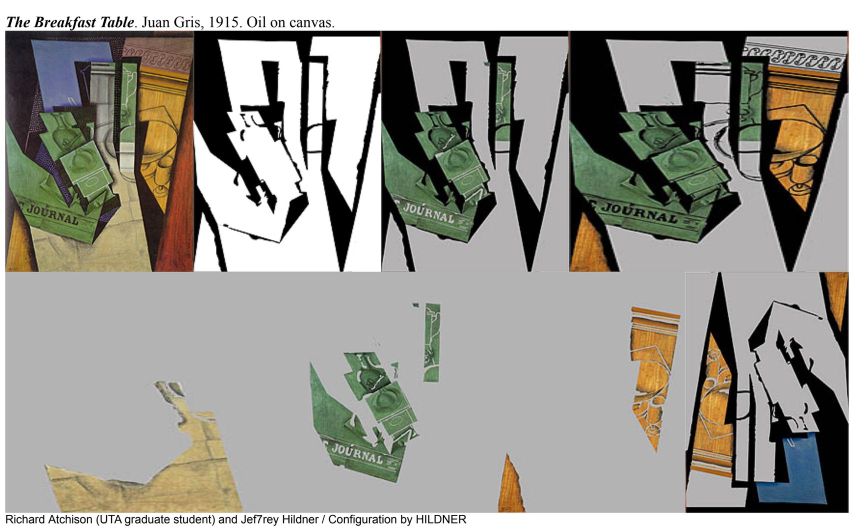
Mabelle Nicolalde (UTA graduate student) and Jef7rey Hildner / Configuration by HILDNER

***Fruit, Dish, Glass, and Lemon* (*Still Life with Newspaper*)**. Juan Gris, 1916. Oil on canvas.



Vincent Jarrard (UTA graduate student) and Jef7rey Hildner / Configuration by HILDNER

The Breakfast Table. Juan Gris, 1915. Oil on canvas.



Richard Atchison (UTA graduate student) and Jef7rey Hildner / Configuration by HILDNER

The Violin. Juan Gris, 1916. Oil on canvas.



Jason Presley (UTA graduate student) and Jef7rey Hildner
Configuration + CERVANTES facade for Casa Hispanica at Columbia University (2005) by HILDNER

JEF7REY HILDNER (aka Madison Gray, Eliot Plum, and Henry Trucks) is an architect, a painter, and a writer. Author of ***Garches 1234***, ***Picasso Lessons***, ***Daedalus 9***, and ***Henry Trucks—Painter***, his award-winning work and his essays on the theory and practice of art appear in a wide range of publications, including ***Global Architecture Houses***, ***Journal of Architectural Education***, and the book ***Architectural Formalism***, which features his essay "**Formalism: Move | Meaning**" alongside essays by theorists Rosalind Krauss, Peggy Deamer, Robert Slutzky, and Colin Rowe. Hildner focuses on **Formalism** in his forthcoming book ***Visual Ef9ects***, the title of his presentation at the 2016 Syracuse University Florence Architecture Program symposium, "**The *F* Word**." He earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Princeton University.

Profile: www.thearchitectpainter.com/profile.html



See also my pamphlet **PICASSO LESSONS: The Sixth Woman of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon***.
PICASSO LESSONS **underscores the lessons of "Empty/Full"—expressed by what I call Significant Space: the product of a design in which FORM functions not only as SPACE-OCCUPIER, but also as SPACE-DEFINER.**
See my other books: www.lulu.com/spotlight/JEF7REY

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Note about this updated version of my original 2001 essay:

I wrote the original version of "Empty/Full" in the fall of 2001. And now in 2013, I've given the essay a total makeover, because in the interim I honed my skills as a writer. And when I read "Empty/Full" recently, I laughed. I liked the essay's content. I liked the essay's energy and free-flowing development of ideas. And I liked that the spirit moved me 12 years ago to sit at my keyboard and pound the essay out.

But during the nine-year stint from 2002-2011 that I worked as a senior writer and editor for *The Christian Science Journal* and *Christian Science Sentinel*, I learned how to avoid jargon. I learned how to write for a special, inside audience in ways that could also reach a general, outside audience. I learned how to explain complex ideas in simple ways, how to use ordinary words to explain extraordinary concepts. And I learned not to bury the lead.

So when I reread "Empty/Full," I saw clearly that building to my *Eureka!* moment didn't work. My discovery got lost in the essay's dense matrix of supporting ideas.

And add this to the equation: During seven of the nine years that I served as writer and editor for those two magazines, I also headed the design department as creative director. My unique double-role as a member of the editorial and design sides of the magazines schooled me in the art of combining text and pictures in reader-friendly and reader-attention ways, especially an article's headline and the lead visual. Seen through this lens, through the new eyes that I'd developed at the magazines, my layout of "Empty/Full" 2001 lacked user-friendly clarity. The layout, especially at the top of the essay didn't measure up. The beginning of the essay lacked a true CVI: Center of Visual Impact.

William Faulkner said, "In writing, you must kill your darlings." (And as I like to break the rules of grammar and say, "Live Brave.") So I knuckled down and reworked the essay. I sought streamlined clarity and cut-to-the-chase focus on the major theme: Empty/Full. And to hit my goal, I figured it would help a lot if the look and feel of the layout was less full and more empty.